
STANDARDIZED EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

APPROVED COURSE OF INSTRUCTION

FIELD COURSE

COMMAND AND GENERAL STAFF

**MODULE 12
I-400**

**PARTICIPANT
REFERENCE
MANUAL
2003**

STANDARDIZED EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

APPROVED COURSE OF INSTRUCTION

FIELD COURSE

MODULE 12

COMMAND AND GENERAL STAFF

2003

PARTICIPANT REFERENCE MANUAL

Table of Contents

	Page #
Contents	i
Objectives	1
I. Background Related to Command and General Staff Development	2
II. Determination of Command and General Staff Functions	3
Line and Staff Organizations	3
Command and General Staff Titles	4
III. Major Responsibilities of Command and General Staff Positions	5
Summary of Responsibilities for the Incident Commander	5
The ICS General Staff Positions	5
The Command Staff	10
IV. Agency Representative	13

Each Command and General Staff position is explained in terms of principal responsibilities and importance to the organization. Guidelines for activation of the Command and General Staff positions and the role of deputies and assistants are discussed. Relationships and duties are covered for each Command Staff member and for Agency Representatives.

Objectives:

1. Identify the steps built into the ICS design to compensate for previous incident management problems.
2. Describe the primary guidelines related to Command and General Staff positions.
3. Summarize principal responsibilities for each Command and General Staff member.
4. Describe the roles of deputies and assistants in incident management.
5. Describe the purposes and responsibilities of agency representatives, reporting relationships, and how they can be effectively used within the incident organization.
6. Develop a Command and General Staff organization around a simulated scenario.

I. Background Related to Command and General Staff Development

The Incident Command System was developed in response to problems that create major difficulties in incident management. These problems are often familiar to emergency service personnel. They include, for example, several agencies or jurisdictions with shared responsibility on a single incident, different organization structures, lack of communications, different terminology, etc.

In addition to the problem of the single agency approach to incident management, one of the other major problems in previous incident management organizations was that there was too much authority vested in the top leadership role. The person in charge made virtually all the decisions. Assistants and deputies were usually not empowered to take independent actions. The result was that the incident organization took on the character, training and experience of the person in charge.

One result was that as an incident grew, the management and decision-making load on the organization's leader also increased. As a result, major decisions often were not being made in a timely manner.

Another consequence was that span of control also expanded as the organization grew. Often, the organizational leader had far too many "points of contact" to be effective. Too large a span of control has often been cited as a major problem in incident management.

To resolve these problems, the ICS design contained the following requirements:

1. A standardized functional organization must be established.
2. Related functions should be grouped together within the organization.
3. Subordinates within the organization must be delegated the necessary authority to manage their assigned functions with maximum autonomy, in accordance with the incident action plan objectives.
4. Every incident, small or large, simple or complex, must have some form of an incident action plan whether oral or written.

The incident action plan must be made known to all supervisory personnel. It will guide their operational actions for a prescribed period of time.

As a result of including these requirements in the ICS design, it was possible to adequately organize and manage, delegate authority, and share responsibility.

Obvious outgrowths of this were to reduce the span of control for the organizational leader to an effective level, and reduce the need for continual instructions to subordinates.

The use of distributed authority in ICS is a primary factor in creating an incident organization that is responsive to management by objectives.

II. Determination of Command and General Staff Functions

ICS was designed by identifying the primary activities or functions necessary to effectively respond to incidents.

Analyses of incident reports, and review of military organizations were all used in ICS development. These analyses identified the primary needs of incidents.

As incidents became more complex, difficult, and expensive, the need for an organizational commander became more evident. Thus in ICS, and especially in larger incidents, the Incident Commander commands the organization and the ICS Organization manages the incident.

In addition to the Command function, other desired functions and activities were:

- To delegate authority and to provide a separate organizational level within the ICS structure with sole responsibility for the tactical direction and control of resources.
- To provide logistical support to the incident organization.
- To provide planning services for both current and future activities.
- To provide cost assessment, time recording, and procurement control necessary to support the incident and the managing of claims.
- To promptly and effectively interact with the media, and provide informational services for the incident, involved agencies, and the public.
- To provide a safe operating environment within all parts of the incident organization.
- To ensure that assisting and cooperating agencies needs are met, and to see that they are used in an effective manner.

While other activities were identified, these major incident activities became the basis for the ICS organization. All other functions support these activities.

A. Line and Staff Organizations

In reviewing the list of the seven primary activities, some of them, e.g., tactical direction and logistical support, have quite specific responsibilities. These kinds of activities also require the most support to accomplish their assignments. Other functional areas, e.g., safety or information, have a more general relationship to the incident.

Therefore, the ICS development team placed certain functions into a classic direct line management organization, and the others became support staff functions.

The primary direct line management functions were established as Sections in the ICS organization and were called:

- Operations
- Planning/Intelligence
- Logistics
- Finance/Administration

The primary Support Staff functions were designated as:

- Information
- Safety
- Liaison

From this breakout, the ICS Command and General Staff organizations developed.

The four line General Staff functions and the three Command Staff support functions have worked well in a variety of incident applications.

It became evident as ICS was used for a wider variety of incident types, that these functions would apply to the management of any incident of any size, independent of the nature of the incident, and could also be applied to the management of planned events.

B. Command and General Staff Titles

To provide an even clearer distinction, personnel filling Command and General Staff positions were given distinctive titles.

All General Staff managers in the ICS are titled "Chiefs", (i.e., Operations Chief, Planning/Intelligence Chief).

All Command Staff personnel are titled "Officers", (i.e., Information Officer, Safety Officer, Liaison Officer).

All other levels within the organization have distinctive titles to help in identifying their position in the organization. These will be covered shortly.

The reason for using titles in the organization is often not understood. The use of titles provides another level of consistency, especially in:

1. Multi-agency incidents - where many agencies must come together rapidly and work together effectively.
2. In ordering resources - where ordering will require some title be attached to the position.
3. Having unique position titles allows for the use of the best qualified persons in the position without regard to any single agency's rank structure.

III. Major Responsibilities of Command and General Staff Positions

Responsibilities of the Command and General Staff positions have been covered in previous modules. The following is a brief summary of each position.

The Incident Commander is technically not a part of either the General or Command staff.

A. Summary of Responsibilities for the Incident Commander

- Make sure you have clear authority and know agency policy.
- Ensure incident safety.
- Establish an Incident Command Post.
- Obtain a briefing from the prior Incident Commander and/or assess the situation.
- Establish immediate priorities.
- Determine incident objectives and strategy(ies) to be followed.
- Establish the level of organization needed, and continuously monitor the operation and effectiveness of that organization.
- Manage planning meetings as required.
- Approve and implement the Incident Action Plan.
- Coordinate the activities of the Command and General Staff.
- Approve requests for additional resources or for the release of resources.
- Approve the use of volunteers, and auxiliary personnel.
- Authorize the release of information to the news media.
- Order demobilization of the incident when appropriate.
- Ensure incident after-action reports are complete.

B. The ICS General Staff Positions

The ICS General Staff consists of the following positions:

- Operations Section Chief
- Planning/Intelligence Section Chief

- Logistics Section Chief
- Finance/Administration Section Chief.

General guidelines related to General Staff positions:

- Only one person will be designated to lead each General Staff position.
- General Staff positions may be filled by qualified persons from any agency or jurisdiction.
- Members of the General Staff report directly to the Incident Commander. If a General Staff position is not activated, the Incident Commander will have responsibility for that functional activity.
- Deputy positions may be established for each of the General Staff positions. Deputies are individuals fully qualified to fill the primary position. Deputies can be designated from other jurisdictions or agencies, as appropriate. This is a good way to bring about greater inter-agency coordination.

For example on an incident involving three jurisdictions, one jurisdiction would take the lead as Operations Section Chief. The other two jurisdictions could have deputies working with the Operations Section Chief.

- General Staff members may exchange information with any person within the organization. Direction takes place through the chain of command. This is an important concept in ICS.
- General Staff positions should not be combined. For example, to establish a "Planning/Intelligence and Logistics Section" it is better to initially create the two separate functions, and if necessary for a short time place one person in charge of both. That way, the transfer of responsibility can be made easier.

The reasons not to combine positions are:

- If they need to be separated at a later time, this could cause confusion due to the mix of assignments, staffing, etc.
- This creates a "non-standard" organization which would be confusing to incoming agencies.

1. Operations Section Chief

The Operations Section Chief is responsible for managing all tactical operations at an incident. The Incident Action Plan provides the necessary guidance. The need to expand the Operations Section is generally dictated by the number of tactical resources involved and is influenced by span of control considerations.

Major responsibilities of the Operations Section Chief:

- Manage tactical operations.
- Ensure interaction is taking place with other agencies.
- Assist in the development of the operations portion of the Incident Action Plan.
- Supervise the execution of the operations portion of the Incident Action Plan.
- Maintain close contact with subordinate positions.
- Ensure safe tactical operations.
- Request additional resources to support tactical operations.
- Approve release of resources from active assignments (not release from the incident).
- Make or approve expedient changes to the operations portion of the Incident Action Plan.
- Maintain close communication with the Incident Commander.

2. Planning/Intelligence Section Chief

The Planning/Intelligence Section Chief is responsible for providing planning and status services for the incident. Under the direction of the Planning/Intelligence Section Chief, the Planning/Intelligence Section collects situation and resources status information, evaluates it, and processes the information for use in developing incident action plans. Dissemination of information can be in the form of the Incident Action Plan, formal briefings, or through map and status board displays.

Major responsibilities of the Planning/Intelligence Section Chief:

- Collect and manage all incident-relevant operational data.
- Provide input to the Incident Commander and Operations Section Chief for use in preparing the Incident Action Plan.
- Supervise preparation of the Incident Action Plan.
- Conduct and facilitate planning meetings.
- Reassign personnel already on site to ICS organizational positions as needed and appropriate.
- Establish information requirements and reporting schedules for Planning/Intelligence Section Units.

- Determine the need for specialized resources to support the incident.
- Assemble and disassemble resources not assigned to Operations.
- Establish specialized data collection systems as necessary. (e.g., weather)
- Assemble information on alternative strategies and contingency plans.
- Provide periodic predictions on incident potential.
- Report any significant changes in incident status.
- Compile and display incident status information.
- Oversee preparation of the Demobilization Plan.
- Incorporate Traffic, Medical, Communications Plans, and other supporting material into the Incident Action Plan.

3. Logistics Section Chief

The Logistics Section Chief provides all incident support needs with the exception of air logistics support.

The Logistics Section is responsible for providing:

- Facilities
- Transportation
- Communications
- Supplies
- Equipment maintenance and fueling
- Food services (for responders)
- Medical services (for responders)
- All off-incident resources.

Major responsibilities of the Logistics Section Chief:

- Manage all incident logistics.
- Provide logistical input to the Incident Commander in preparing the Incident Action Plan.
- Brief Logistics Branch Directors and Unit Leaders as needed.
- Identify anticipated and known incident service and support requirements.

- Request additional resources as needed.
- Develop as required, the Communications, Medical, and Traffic Plans. (Refers to coordination of incident resources).
- Oversee demobilization of the Logistics Section.

4. Finance/Administration Section Chief

The Finance/Administration Section Chief is responsible for managing all financial aspects of an incident. Not all incidents will require an Finance/Administration Section. Only when the involved agencies have a specific need for finance services will the Section be activated.

Due to the specialized nature of the administration and finance function, the Finance/Administration Section Chief is usually a member of the jurisdiction or agency requiring financial services. However, that is not an absolute requirement.

Major responsibilities of the Finance/Administration Section Chief:

- Manage all financial aspects of an incident.
- Provide financial and cost analysis information as requested.
- Ensure compensation and claims functions are being addressed relative to the incident.
- Gather pertinent information from briefings with responsible agencies.
- Develop an operating plan for the Finance/Administration Section; fill section supply and support needs.
- Meet with assisting and cooperating agency representatives as needed.
- Maintain daily contact with agency(ies) administrative headquarters on finance matters.
- Ensure that all personnel and equipment time records are accurately completed and transmitted to home agencies, according to policy.
- Provide financial input for demobilization planning.
- Ensure that all obligation documents initiated at the incident are properly prepared and completed.
- Brief agency administrative personnel on all incident-related financial issues needing attention or follow-up.

5. Activating General Staff Positions

General Staff positions on an incident are activated only as needed. Smaller incidents may not require activation. A primary concern is always span of control.

There are no guidelines as to which positions would be activated first. The complexity of the incident, experience, training, and the judgment of the Incident Commander will determine the order of activation.

An important consideration in ICS is that those positions not activated remain the responsibility of the Incident Commander.

C. The Command Staff

There are three other important activities that are the responsibility of the Incident Commander, in addition to the primary command and general staff functions.

- Handling public information and media relations.
- Maintaining close contact with assisting and cooperating agencies.
- Ensuring maximum possible safety for all assigned personnel.

As incidents grow in size or become more complex, any one of these activities can consume much of the Incident Commander's time. Therefore, it is important for the Incident Commander to recognize the importance of and quickly fill needed Command Staff positions. The Command Staff in ICS normally consists of:

- Information Officer
- Safety Officer
- Liaison Officer

The Incident Commander may add other Command Staff positions as necessary to assist with responsibilities attributed directly to the Incident Commander.

Guidelines related to Command Staff Positions:

- Only one person will be designated for each Command Staff position. This applies to all incidents including multi-jurisdictional incidents.
- Command Staff positions should not be combined.
- Command Staff positions may be filled by qualified persons from any appropriate agency or jurisdiction.
- There are no deputy positions at the Command Staff level.
- Each of the positions may have one or more assistants as necessary.

- Assistants are recommended for larger incidents.
- Assistants can be designated from other jurisdictions or agencies as appropriate.
- Command Staff members report directly to the Incident Commander.
- Command Staff members may interact with any position within the ICS for purposes of information exchange.

1. Information Officer

The Information Officer is responsible for developing information about the incident for the news media, incident personnel, and other appropriate agencies and organizations. Reasons for the Incident Commander to designate an Information Officer include:

- An obvious high visibility or sensitive incident.
- Media demands for information may interfere with the IC's effectiveness.
- The media's capability to acquire (and interpret) its own information is increasing.
- Reduces the risk of multiple sources releasing possibly conflicting information.

The following are the major responsibilities of the Information Officer: (Note that agencies will have different policies and procedures relative to the handling of public information. For example, in some areas, incident media releases must be first cleared by the Agency Executive).

- Determine from the Incident Commander any limits on the information to be released.
- Develop information for use in media briefings.
- Obtain Incident Commander's approval of media news releases.
- Conduct periodic media briefings.
- Arrange for tours and other interviews or briefings that may be required.
- Monitor and forward media information that may be useful to incident planning.
- Maintain current information summaries and/or displays on the incident.
- Make information about the incident available to incident personnel.
- Participate in the planning meeting.

2. Safety Officer

The Safety Officer's function on the Command Staff is to identify, assess and/or anticipate hazardous and unsafe situations, and to develop and recommend measures for assuring personnel safety. Working through the chain of command, the Safety Officer will correct unsafe situations.

An important point to remember is that the Safety Officer may exercise authority to directly stop unsafe acts if personnel are in imminent life-threatening danger, and are operating outside the parameter of the Incident Action Plan.

Under OSHA regulation 1910.120, the Safety Officer function is required by law at the tactical operations level on hazardous materials incidents.

Major responsibilities of the Safety Officer are:

- Participate in planning meetings.
- Identify hazardous situations associated with the incident, and make sure that problems are taken care of prior to an accident.
- Assign assistants qualified to evaluate special hazards.
- Review the Incident Action Plan for safety implications and prepare incident specific safety message or plan based on hazards, problems, or agency requirements.
- Initiate preliminary investigation of accidents that have occurred within the incident area.
- Review and approve the Incident Medical Plan.
- Ensure safety messages and briefings are made as needed.

3. Liaison Officer

Incidents that are multi-jurisdictional or that have several agencies involved at the incident scene may require the establishment of the Liaison Officer position on the Command Staff.

The Liaison Officer will be the point of contact for Agency Representatives assigned to the incident by assisting or cooperating agencies. These are usually personnel other than those directly associated with resources on direct tactical assignments.

The following are some of the main reasons to establish the Liaison Officer position at an incident:

- When several agencies send or plan to send Agency Representatives to an incident in support of their resources.

- When the IC can no longer provide the time for individual coordination with each Agency Representative.

Major responsibilities and duties of the Liaison Officer at an incident:

- Act as a point of contact for Agency Representatives.
- Maintain a list of assisting and cooperating agencies and Agency Representatives.
- Assist in setting up and coordinating interagency contacts.
- Monitor incident operations to identify current or potential inter-organizational problems.
- Participate in planning meetings, providing current resource status, including limitations and capabilities of agency resources.
- Provide agency-specific demobilization information and requirements.

IV. Agency Representative

An Agency Representative is an individual assigned to an incident from an assisting or cooperating agency. An Agency Representative is different than an individual assigned to an incident to be a part of a Unified Command.

The Agency Representative must be given authority to make decisions on matters affecting that agency's participation at the incident.

Agency Representatives can function as IC's in a Unified Command if they have been given that authority by their agencies.

Even in a Unified Command organization, agencies may provide other Agency Representatives to assist in the multi-agency coordination.

Agency Representatives report to the Liaison Officer, or to the Incident Commander in the absence of a Liaison Officer.

Major responsibilities of the Agency Representative:

- Ensure that all of their agency resources have completed check-in at the incident.
- Obtain briefing from the Liaison Officer or Incident Commander.
- Inform their agency personnel on the incident that the Agency Representative position has been filled.
- Attend planning meetings as required.
- Provide input to the planning process on the use of agency resources unless resource technical specialists are assigned from the agency.
- Cooperate fully with the Incident Commander and the Command and General Staff on the agency's involvement at the incident.
- Oversee the well-being and safety of agency personnel assigned to the incident.
- Advise the Liaison Officer of any special agency needs, requirements or agency restrictions.
- Report to agency dispatch or headquarters on a pre-arranged schedule.
- Ensure that all agency personnel and equipment are properly accounted for and released prior to departure.
- Ensure that all required agency forms, reports, and documents are complete prior to departure.
- Have a debriefing session with the Liaison Officer or Incident Commander prior to departure.